

29<sup>th</sup> September 2011

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**COMMUNITY ACTION IN WASHINGTON – PROGRESS REVIEW**

**Progress Report on 2011/12 Workplan**

**1 Why has it come to Committee?**

- 1.1 The report provides an update of progress against agreed actions in the current year's (2011/12) Work Plan (**Annex 1**).

**2 Background**

- 2.1 The purpose of the work plan is to clearly identify the key priorities for Area Committee to discuss, deliver actions and monitor throughout the year, with the overall outcome to improve the quality of life for residents within the Washington area.
- 2.2 This report presents an update with regard to the key priorities for 2011/12 and other priorities carried forward from 2010/11.

**3 Helping local people access employment opportunities – with a focus on young people not on employment, education and training (NEETs)**

**3.1 NEET Support and Co-ordination Call for Project**

- 3.1.1 Proposed through the Employment Task and Finish Group and following the NEET research and audit work, a Call for Projects has been commissioned to provide a comprehensive and co-ordinated programme of support for NEETs in Washington. Applications closed 25<sup>th</sup> August and based on project outcomes included in the published Project Brief and SIB governance processes and protocols, independent assessments have been carried out on all submissions.
- 3.1.2 Under **Item 2b, Annex 1b** the standard executive summary of all applications received for this Call for Projects is presented. Members will be requested to consider the information as presented and agree the allocation of SIB funding from the 2011/12 budget.

**3.2 Employer's Demand Survey & Washington Focus Report**

- 3.2.1 A Skills and Employment Demand Survey was commissioned in April 2011 with consultants Trends Business Research (TBR). The survey was to have a city-wide perspective, with a view to understanding employers' demands and informing a future skills strategy for the city, which will influence skills provision being delivered in Sunderland to support future economic growth. TBR surveyed 750 employers to inform the findings. The final draft was received 15 September 2011 and the final report will be produced by 29 September 2011.
- 3.2.2 In order to enhance the Washington focus of the survey, a further contribution of £10,000 was added to the budget by Washington Area Committee. This enabled a larger sample size of Washington-based employers to be surveyed and also the

production of a separate Washington Focus Report to sit alongside the main citywide report. A draft version of this report was prepared mid August and the findings were discussed at the Business Breakfast. Using the feedback received at the Business Breakfast, a final version of the Washington Focus Report is being prepared, which will be submitted by 22 September 2011.

3.2.3 The aim of the Focus Report is to provide evidence relating to employment opportunities for young people in the Washington area. This evidence will support interventions to help young people find work in the area. The report will identify specific barriers that are preventing businesses from employing young people in the Washington area.

3.2.4 140 telephone surveys were conducted and 10 in-depth interviews took place, together with desk research and economic analysis.

3.2.5 Key findings included:

- Under half of businesses employ people aged 25 and under in their team.
- Only 11% employ young people aged 16-18 (12% citywide).
- 39% employ young people aged 19-25 (37% citywide).
- Barriers include transport issues, lack of work readiness, lack of jobs/vacancies, graduate retention, rule changes in apprenticeships.
- The most commonly cited benefit to employing young people is the ability to mould them into the employees they need.

3.2.6 Skills issues:

- Skills perceived as lacking in young people include work experience (57%), customer handling (47%) and oral/verbal communication (43%).
- To some extent, these are skills that are developed through experience of employment.
- Functional numeracy and literacy levels need to be improved against some young people in Washington.

3.2.7 Work Experience:

- Young people want work experience opportunities that lead to employment.
- Firms are unwilling to hire young people without relevant experience.
- Firms that provide internships or work experience schemes are more likely to recruit the young person, having given them a 'test drive'.

### **3.3 Washington Business Breakfast**

3.3.1 A "Business Breakfast" took place on 24 August 2011 at the George Washington Hotel. A total of 34 people attended, including local employers and business club representatives, key stakeholders such as Connexions, Jobcentre Plus and the National Apprenticeship Service, the VCS, council officers and elected members. Presentations were given by consultants TBR and by Faye Gething, the NEET Co-ordinator, to summarise their recent research and present key findings.

3.3.2 Those attending were asked to take part in a workshop, to consider 3 questions:

- What skills does an experienced candidate have that sets them apart?

- What are the barriers to providing employment and work experience for young people?
- What could be done to help Washington businesses provide more employment and work experience opportunities to local young people?

3.3.3 The workshop sessions identified several key messages expressed directly by participating employers, regarding what they look for in a candidate.

Personality, passion, punctuality and personal presentation were all important. A strong work ethic was needed, demonstrated perhaps by a young person having had a Saturday job or doing voluntary work. The right attitude was vital, as was an understanding of what is acceptable/not acceptable in the workplace. 'Functional Skills' (in maths and reading) at level 2 were important. Interestingly, it was also important for the employer to understand how to nurture a young person who may be undertaking work experience.

3.3.4 In terms of the barriers, the employers identified time rather than direct costs as the main barrier to providing employment and work experience for a young person. Other barriers included travel costs; lack of knowledge about opportunities that are there; insufficient suitable opportunities; lack of preparation by schools for the young people participating in the work experience; lack of funding. A real barrier was also the 'mass confusion' in the marketplace, particularly with all of the policy changes around skills being introduced at present.

As well as discussing barriers, some very positive solutions were identified, including the idea of sharing an apprentice. The need for a 'cluster' of willing employers was raised, who could offer a wide range of workplace experiences to young people.

3.3.5 Regarding the question about what can be done to help, employers should be encouraged to engage more with schools and also to understand more fully the benefits to be gained from employing a young person or offering work experience placements. A reduction in bureaucracy was also needed, plus better co-ordination to bring together employers offering vacancies with young people looking for opportunities. The practical step of making better use of business networks to cascade information was stressed, with a view to encouraging more employers to become involved.

For further information please contact Karen Alexander, Employment and Training Manager on 0191 305 1211, or email [Karen.alexander@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:Karen.alexander@sunderland.gov.uk)

### **3.4 Washington Work Space Project**

3.4.1 The Business Case for the project to build managed workspace in Washington was submitted to ONE at the end of May 2011. There were some queries raised at appraisal stage over the timetable for delivery of the project being too long and also demonstration of value for money due to the complexity of a land acquisition, design and build project. Sunderland City Council does not own any land in Washington and therefore any project to build managed workspace in Washington must come with the

land as part of the project package. The Project Team has been exceptionally given an extension to the end of November to submit a re-drafted business case which will identify the preferred contractor, and provide CLG with all of the documentation they require to carry out a full value for money evaluation.

- 3.4.2 The procurement process has undergone a number of stages already.
- § A Prior Identification Notice (PIN) was released to the market in April 2011. A PIN gives potential developers/contractors the opportunity to express an interest in the project and gives the Council the opportunity to test the market for interest. There were 24 expressions of interest received.
  - § A pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) was issued in July 2011 and from this 30 developers/contractors returned a completed PQQ. The PQQ is used as a mechanism to assist the tendering process by asking for detailed information about the developer/contractor which can be used to assess suitability to be invited to tender. Contractors/developers within this PQQ had to identify if they had land available within Washington. From the 30 PQQ's only 5 could satisfy the land requirement. These 5 will be invited to submit tender documentation.
  - § Tender documents are being issued on the 7 September 2011 and due back on the 6 December 2011. (As this is outwith the timescale agreed with CLG outlined above, the project team will need to seek a further extension).
- 3.4.3 It is anticipated that approval will be received in March 2012, at which point full planning permission will be sought. Work will then commence on site in June 2012, with the building being handed over in August 2013.

For any further information please contact Berni Whitaker, Enterprise Manager on 0191 305 1205 [berni.whitaker@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:berni.whitaker@sunderland.gov.uk)

### **3.5 Education and Heritage Project Update**

- 3.5.1 The Education and Heritage Officer (EHO) and Trainee Apprentice are now in post and have commenced activities and engagement across the area through a number of local organisations. The EHO has already made links with CAs. Bowes Railway and is commencing working with schools to establish a programme.
- 3.5.2 A project specific website and relevant publicity material and media is also being developed.

## **4 Activities for young people and addressing youth disorder**

### **4.1 Activities for young people Call for Projects**

- 4.1.1 Proposed through the Young People's Task and Finish Group and following Area Committee approving a call for projects and an allocation of **£11,000 SIB** (matched to £11,000 Children's Services budget) for activities for young people at the last Committee meeting, applications closed 25<sup>th</sup> August. Based on project outcomes included in the published Project Brief and SIB governance processes and protocols, independent assessments have been carried out on all submissions.
- 4.1.2 Under **Item 2b, Annex 1c** the standard executive summary of all applications received for this Call for Projects is presented. Members will be requested to consider the information as presented and agree the allocation of SIB funding from the 2011/12 budget.

## 5 Tackling Health Inequalities

- 5.1 As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011 we had 500 people on the database, with 168 of them signed up for all five courses. We now have a total of 74 Health Champions across the City, 13 of which are Washington based. After completion of all five modules a Health Champion pack is sent which includes a letter of thanks from the Director of Public Health, a Health Champion pin badge, Health and Wellbeing Guide from the Wellness Centres and an A5 useful information guide with phone numbers and web addresses. To date 22 young people have been trained in different courses, this has been in school/college holidays. We are aiming to have at least 5 peer educators trained as Health Champions by November 2011

**Table 1 Health Champion Information (Figures as of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011)**

	People from organisations that work with people in Washington <sup>1</sup>		
<b>Number of people on the Health Champion Database</b> <i>Breakdown of the sectors on the database</i>	331		
	<b>Stat</b> 155	<b>Vol</b> 137	<b>Other</b> 38

<sup>1</sup>Washington have been running the Health Champion Programme since December 2010

- 5.2 The first Councillor has been trained as a Health Champion, as well as four other Councillors taking part in the programme. The Primary Care Trust holds information on people who are booking on to the Health Champions Training Programme, and updates this information on a monthly basis. The information is used to update the Area Committees at each meeting.
- 5.3 A celebration event has been organised for Thursday 13th October at the Stadium of Light, to celebrate and thank the people of Sunderland who have given their time to go through the Health Champion training programme. At this event Health Champions will be given a certificate and individually thanked for their commitment.
- 5.4 A virtual network has been developed with bi-monthly newsletters sent via email. The newsletter gives updated information with regards to courses, useful numbers, news articles etc. Names of the people who have completed the Health Champion training is included and it is hoped that this approach is seen as a social movement across the City. .

## 6 Attractive Neighbourhood

- 6.1 Service requests, complaints and resident surveys and satisfaction levels indicate that an attractive and cared for environment is still a priority for the area. Responsive Local Services continue to work with and report to Area Committee through the Area Response Manager. A verbal report will be presented at the meeting highlighting key successes, issues and activity.
- 6.2 Area Committee has also maintained an influencing role with regard to roadways, highways and traffic management issues. That role will be maintained with regular reports and updates to Area Committee together with the co-ordination of Members Requests for Service.

## 7. Equality, Community Inclusion and Engagement

- 7.1 To develop the capacity and influence of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) across the City, Area Networks have been established and delegates represent each Area Network at Area Committee taking forward issues on behalf of the whole VCS in the area and reporting back, providing a two-way flow of communication between SCN and the Area Committee.
- 7.2 Washington Area Network delegates will present a verbal report to each Area Committee meeting informing Members of activity, progress, issues and concerns of the sector.

**Recommendations:**

Members are requested

- To note the report, progress updates and actions as detailed in this report and in the Work plan attached as **Annex 1**

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